

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

Publication No. 157140

ISSN 0012-2874

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the  
old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

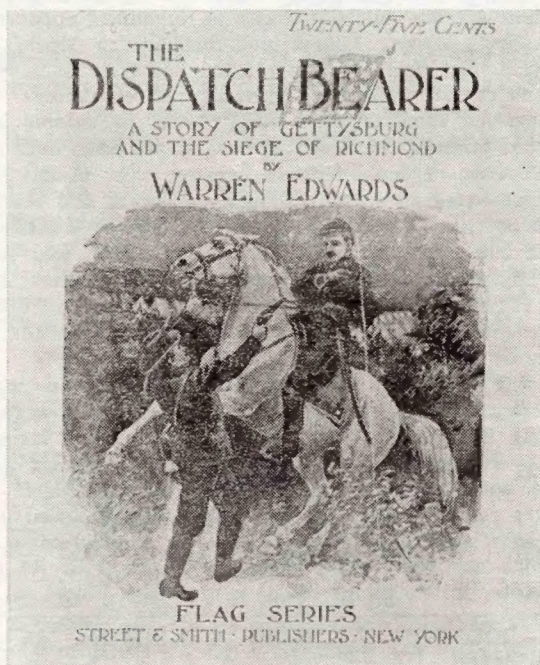
Vol. 56 No. 4

August 1987

Whole No. 586

## Armed with Pen and Ink: The Oliver Optic-Louisa May Alcott Feud

John T. Dizer



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES 226

FLAG SERIES

Publisher: Street & Smith, 39 Rose St., New York, N. Y. Issues: 14 (highest number seen advertised). Dates: Jan. 25, 1896 to July 25, 1896. Schedule: Semi-monthly: Size: 7x5". Pages: 200 to 250. Price: 25c. Illustrations: Pictorial colored cover. Contents: Stories of military life.



## Armed with Pen and Ink: The Oliver Optic-Louisa May Alcott Feud

John T. Dizer

Sweetness and light, sweetiess and light. This is the common image of Louisa May Alcott, particularly to those who know only "Little Women." Alcott, however, could be anything but sweetness and light. In fact, she was on occasion downright disagreeable. I was going to say bitchy but I suppose it is inappropriate for this august group, even though the comment is accurate.

Her judgment was certainly fallible and her taste even more so, as Mark Twain and Oliver Optic both knew. When "Huckleberry Finn" was published in 1885, the Concord Public Library (Alcott's home town) called the book "Veriest trash" and banned it. Alcott wrote, "If Mr. Clemens cannot think of something better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses, he'd best stop writing for them." Pungent it is, but sweetness and light, it isn't. In terms of inaccuracy, it is also something of a classic.

Alcott's comments on the writings of Oliver Optic (William T. Adams) were equally inaccurate and unfair and what is more, they were included in "Eight Cousins," one of her own girls books. This was just plain dirty pool, particularly since Alcott's initial success in juveniles apparently came as a result of Adams' popularity. Adams took umbrage at Alcott's comments. In an editorial in his own magazine, he refuted her statements and included his own observations on her judgment, accuracy and character.

Although anyone familiar with either Alcott or Adams is familiar with the feud it should probably be repeated here so we have both a time line and a frame of reference. I could note in passing that Alcott attacked Optic once and Optic rebutted once and although reviewers and others got into the act also it was not what I call a real feud. However it's been called a feud for better than 100 years. It is certain that Alcott's and Adams were not close friends. My concern is really not so much with the controversy, since it seems to be somewhat archtypical of divergent attitudes towards children's books in this country, but more with Alcott's motivation for the attack and to show a little of the critical attitudes of the times.

The time was 1875. Optic had about 53 juveniles in print. Alcott had written her first successful children's book in 1868, just seven years before. She would never have written the book except for the insistent urging of Thomas Niles of Robert Brothers. Some sources say Niles wanted an Optic type story, but written for girls. We do know that Alcott questioned her abilities and was reluctant to write the book. She followed up in 1869 with "Good Wives," now a part of "Little Women." In 1870 came "An Old Fashioned Girl" which surprised both Niles and Alcott with its popularity, and in 1871 she wrote "Little Men." She wrote "My Boys" in 1871, "Shawl

**DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP**—Vol. 56, No. 4, Whole No. 586 — August 1987  
Publications No. 157140 ISSN 0012-2874

Published six times per year at 821 Vermont Street, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. Edward T. LeBlanc, editor, 87 School Street, Fall River, Mass. 02720, to whom new and renewal subscriptions, address changes and advertising should be sent. Second class postage paid at Lawrence, Kansas 66044. Subscription: \$10 per year. Ad rates: 15c per word, \$3.00 per column inch; \$6.00 per quarter page; \$8.00 per half page and \$15.00 per full page.

Postmaster: Send form 3579 to 821 Vermont St., Lawrence, Kans. 66044



Straps" in 1872 and "Cupid" and "Chow-Chow" in 1873, all collections of short stories under the heading Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag. Her book entitled "Work," a serious adult title, appeared in 1873, possibly because she didn't trust the ephemeral popularity of children's books or possibly because she preferred adult books. The success of her children's books plus a generous financial arrangement with Thomas Niles allowed her to live the life of a celebrated author, as one writer puts it.

"Eight Cousins" was printed serially in "St. Nicholas," which was edited by Mary Mapes Dodge, assisted by Frank R. Stockton, and issued in hard cover late in 1875. In the chapter "Good Bargains," Rose came into her cousin's library "while the readers tore themselves from the heroes of the bar-room and gutter long enough to nod affably to their guest." Rose proceeded to make the older boy quit smoking by giving up her earrings. Her aunt Mrs. Jessie, came in to find out what was going on and said, "I wish Rose would drive a bargain with Will and Georgie also, for I think these books are as bad for the small boys as cigars for the large ones, . . ." "I thought they were all the fashion," answered Dr. Alec, . . . "So is smoking, but it is harmful. The writers of these popular stories intend to do good, I have no doubt, but it seems to me they fail because their motto is, 'Be smart, and you will be rich,' instead of 'Be honest, and you will be happy' I do not judge hastily, Alec, for I have read a dozen, at least of these stories, and, with much that is attractive to boys, I find a great deal to condemn in them, and other parents say the same when I ask them."

"Now, Mum, that's too bad! I like 'em tip-top. This one is a regular screamer," cried Will.

"They're bully books, and I'd like to know where's the harm," added Georgie.

"You have just shown us one of the chief evils, and that is slang," answered their mother quickly.

"Must have it, ma'am. If these chaps talked all right, there'd be no fun in 'em," protested Wi.

"A boot-black MUSN'T use good grammar, and a newsboy MUST swear a little, or he wouldn't be natural," explained Georgie, both boys ready to fight gallantly for their favorites.

"But my sons are neither boot-blacks nor newsboys, and I object to hearing them use such words as 'screamer,' 'bully,' and 'buster.' In fact, I fail to see the advantage of writing books about such people unless it is done in a very different way. I cannot think they will help to refine the ragamuffins, if they read them, and I'm sure they can do no good to the better class of boys, who through these books are introduced to police courts, counterfeiter's dens, gambling houses, drinking saloons, and all sorts of low life."

"Some of them are about first-rate boys, mother; and they go to sea and study, and sail round the world, having great larks all the way."

"I have read about them, Georgie, and though they ARE better than the others, I am not satisfied with these OPTICAL delusions, as I call them. Now, I put it to you boys, is it natural for lads from fifteen to eighteen to command ships, defeat pirates, outwit smugglers, and so cover themselves with glory, that Admiral Farragut invites them to dinner, saying: 'Noble boy, you are an honor to your country!' Or, if the hero is in the army, he has hair-breadth escapes and adventures enough in one small volume to turn his hair white, and in the end he goes to Washington at the express desire of the President or Commander-in-Chief to be promoted to no end of stars and bars. Even if the hero is merely an honest boy trying to get his living, he is not



permitted to do so in a natural way, by hard work and years of patient effort, but is suddenly adopted by a millionaire whose pocket-book he has returned or a rich uncle appears from sea, just in the nick of time; or the remarkable boy earns a few dollars, speculates in pea-nuts or neckties, and grows rich so rapidly that Sinbad in the diamond valley is a pauper compared to him. Isn't it so, boys?"

"Well, the fellows in these books ARE mighty lucky, and very smart, I must say," answered Will, surveying an illustration on the open page before him, where a small but virtuous youth is upsetting a tipsy giant in a bar-room, and under it the elegant inscription: "Dick Dauntless punches the head of Sam Soaker." And so on for several more pages until the rubbishy books were thrown into the fire after the cigars, and the boys promised to reform, at least for a month. "His brother sighed, and obeyed, but privately resolved to finish his story the minute the month was over." Apparently he would have to find another copy.

Mrs. Jessie was about as accurate as Anthony Comstock and Franklin Mathews and if she had read as many examples as she said, it wasn't with an eye to accuracy. All of you erudite scholars recognize at once that she was referring to Alger, Castlemon, and some of the more sanguinary dime novel writers as well as Optic, but "optical delusions" was a pretty personal reference.

Adams was upset, to say the least. He did not reply in his books, though he could have, but fortunately for his spleen he was editor of "Our Boys and Girls," often referred to as Oliver Optic's Magazine. In September of 1875 he vented his spleen, thoroughly. His editorial was called "Sensational Books for Boys" and the style was pungent. He states, "Miss Louise M. Alcott is publishing a story in a magazine. It is called 'Eight Cousins.' The title was doubtless suggested by Miss Douglas's highly successful story, 'Seven Daughters,' published in our magazine. For aught we know, it may be a very good story, and worthy of the fame of the author." — "It is a critical story; or, at least, it contains a chapter of criticism. The topic is 'Sensational Books for Boys,' and she treats it as flippantly as though she knew what she was writing about. The mother of the two boys in the story says she 'has read a dozen at least of these stories,' from which we infer that Miss Alcott has read them; but, judging from some of the quotations she makes, she read them with her elbows." She objects to "these popular stories;" but she is very indefinite. She mixes things terribly. She quotes from one book, and judges another by what she quotes. She quotes from the Optic books, and then fastens upon them the sins of other books, as we shall presently show. . . " And Optic did show in great detail that as a careful critic Alcott was not only inaccurate but rather viciously inaccurate and unfair. Optic also took Alcott over the coals for having the same faults in her books of which she was accusing him and concluded with this rather bitter paragraph:

"Ah, Louise, you are very smart, and you have become rich. Your success mocks that of the juvenile heroes you despise. Even the author of 'Dick Dauntless' and 'Same Soaker,' whoever he may be, would not dare to write up a heroine who rose so rapidly from poverty and obscurity to riches and fame as you did; but in view of the wholesale perversion of the truth we have pointed out, we must ask you to adopt the motto you recommend for others—'Be honest, and you will be happy,' instead of the one you seem to have chosen: 'Be smart and you will be rich.'"

Adams' editorial appeared in September and Alcott apparently had time



to revise the chapter before the book was issued in hard cover for the Christmas trade, but she didn't budge. She was obviously inaccurate, unfair and biased and this was pointed out by other critics as well, but her Comstock-like zeal apparently would not permit retraction or modification.

Appleton's Journal was amused by Alcott's attack on her fellow author. "We wonder, by-the-way, if Miss Alcott realizes the risk she runs in deviating from her own proper field of story-telling and "dropping into" criticism? She devotes a couple of pages of "Eight Cousins" to denouncing the methods of her co-workers and disrespectfully characterizes certain well-known ornaments of current literature as "optical delusions." It is fortunate for her peace of mind, perhaps, that she has put the Atlantic between her and that din of warfare the first notes of which, as we understand, have already sounded."

"Scribner's Monthly" deplored her charge of undesirable language in the books of Oliver Optic, for this was her own greatest weakness. She had attacked Optic "for teaching slang as eagerly as ever a 'hazed' Freshman retaliated upon Freshman when he became a Sophomore." Apparently the reading public enjoyed both the book and the battle such as it was. It didn't seem to affect the sales of either author's books and it certainly kept them in the public eye. Kilgour notes, "Whatever good was to be found in Miss Alcott's remarks was unfortunately ruined by her carelessness and her flippancy, and Optic's reply was appropriately severe." The general feeling seemed to be that Optic had the best of the duel. Some modern writers seem to feel that Alcott won since her books currently have more popularity than those of Optic, though this reasoning seems specious to me.

Apropos of slang, sensationalism and that ilk it is interesting to look at an editorial on "Slang Phrases" in Optic's "Our Boys and Girls" for June 27, 1868. "But to those . . . who would desire, both in speech and manner, to conform to the style and code of gentlemen, we would say, Eschew all which partakes even of the nature of slang." And apropos of Alcott's comments it is fun to examine some reviews of "Eight Cousins" as given in Darling. "St. Nicholas" was very flattering which is not too surprising since "Eight Cousins" first appeared serially in that magazine. The "Scribner Monthly" reviewer said, "Miss Alcott's (writing) . . . too often seemed in danger of dissolving into the same raciness that she gave to the speech of her characters. Her use of slang was particularly undesirable."

"Appleton's Journal" said, "Miss Alcott's stories . . . tend to stimulate that pert 'smartness' and self assertion which are perhaps most offensive characteristic of American children; . . ." "The Literary World" was quite critical, noting, "The action of the story is not likely, and none of the personages possesses notable individuality or interest." "Catholic World" "particularly objected to the 'spirit of self-assertion in the heroine; . . ." "The Overland Monthly" said, "In Character Analysis Miss Alcott shows herself the true artist." "The Independent's" reviewer said "Eight Cousins" was Miss Alcott's best book since "Little Women," with a better style and more individualized characters than the intervening ones." Henry James blasted "Eight Cousins." He preferred the Rollo books and found only "vulgar prose" in Louisa's. . . .

The reviews, however, were generally favorable, as befits a popular author, in spite of the criticism noted above. Even though the general attitude was developing that "books for children should be those children liked, not merely those that adults felt the children ought to have to improve themselves," slang, smartness and self assertion were definitely out.

We need to say something about Optic since little has been written about him in comparison to Alcott, and that little often derogatory. He has been



called the powerhouse of juvenile fiction of the post civil war period. It was partly because of his success that he was the focus of many attacks.

"Oliver Optic" (William T. Adams), lived from 1822 to 1897. In addition to his writing, he taught in public education for 20 years, served as Sunday School teacher and superintendent, edited at least three magazines including "Star Spangled Banner," "Student and Schoolmate" and "Our Boys and Girls," served on the Dorchester and Boston School Committees and traveled extensively gathering material for his writings. He wrote continuously all his adult life and his writings were highly regarded by his youthful readers as well, in his early days, by most critics. He was especially well regarded by his publishers, Lee and Shepard, whom he more or less kept solvent.

Contrary to some recent assessments, Optic did not fade into permanent obscurity after his death or become a footnote (if that) in juvenile history. As Jordan notes, "Some contemporary reviewers called his stories pure and ennobling, 'improving the taste and elevating the mind, while at the same time they stirred the blood and warmed the heart.'" However, she adds, "Yet before his death his books were ruled out of most public libraries." This is an exaggeration.

About the time of Alcott's attack, Optic had noted in the November 1. 1875 introduction to his book "Going West" that this was the 53rd book he had written for young people. He was to go on to complete 125 hard cover juveniles. His books were devoured by young people and were the staples of Sunday School and Public Libraries, as well as favorite gifts at Christmas. Optic was doing very well financially. His books sold so well that, as usual, critics began asking "if the books are so popular with all classes can they be good?" Soon other critics began taking pot shots at him and, like Liberace, he cried? (laughed) all the way to the bank. The Alcott attack was the worst to that time, though, when the ALA got into the act later in the period things got worse. His name was still so well accepted, however, that after his death in 1897, Lee and Shepard commissioned Edward Stratemeyer to complete "An Undivided Union," left unfinished by Oliver Optic. Later in 1910-12, a number of "Golden Days" and "Golden Argosy" series of Optic were published in hard cover by Lothrop Lee and Shepard, posthumously. Optic's books were reprinted for many years into this century and were even included in the Street and Smith "Alger Series" in the 1920's. I read an astonishing number of Optics in the '30's, as well as all of Alcott's juveniles and still have about 100 Optic titles and 25 Alcotts in my collection. Optic's books are still widely collected and, although I like and admire Alcott, I have less trouble reading Optic's books than many of Alcott's.

There is also apparently a renewed interest in Optic in scholarly circles. Dolores Blythe Jones published An "Oliver Optic" Checklist in 1985 and several magazine articles have appeared in recent years. By far the best Optic research is being done by Peter Walther who has obtained many of Optic's own copies of his books together with Optic's writing record journal for the greater part of his life. The first part of Walther's authoritative "Annotated Bibliography of the Complete Published Works of William T. Adams" has already appeared and the second part is in preparation.

A criticism of juvenile books evolved together with the books themselves in the post Civil War period. In the 1860's and '70's, there was no general agreement as to what constituted a "good" book versus an unacceptable book. The moral tone of the pre-Civil War (and to some extent post Civil War) Children's books was impeccably high. Any relationship to live children was entirely coincidental and any energetic and youthful activity was conspicuous



by its absence. So when a certain amount of realism and action appeared, the children were entranced and the critics were generally enthusiastic. As more and more books appeared with more and more action, sometimes to the detriment of realism, some critics became more and more disenchanted. Although the Optics and Algernons and Castlemons were still as moral as any Sunday School superintendent could wish, they pandered to (according to the critics) improbable situations and impossible boyish achievements, the use of common language or "slang" and undesirable activities. The writing was considered hurried and inferior (sometimes correctly) and the naturalism with which the books were first regarded was now called Sensationalism by some. I emphasize the some.

Sensationalism was a catchy label to use to differentiate between them and us and has been used ever since as a major criterion in reviewing children's books, particularly series. It caught on in the 1870's, with the librarians leading the pack. According to Scharnhorst, who in turn quoted from "Library Journal," the Fletcher Free Library of Burlington, Vt., in 1879 became the first public library in the nation to remove books by Optic from its shelves. Much writing and research about "Sensationalism" has been wishful thinking and this may be a case in point. I have six copies of Optic which came from the Fletcher Library. They were printed in the 1870's, were obviously thoroughly read and were then re-bound for additional library use. They were given me by Capt. Chester Mayo, who, I believe, purchased them at a library book sale some years back in Burlington, but certainly not 100 years ago.

Perhaps the most objective statement about Optic is by the eminent Cornelia Meigs who wrote, "Optic's boys were courageous and upright, but though he was consciously a moral writer, he did not allow the moral to interfere with his lively well-told stories, and he was read with enthusiasm by more than one generation of boys and girls."

So with all this background let's back up and examine WHY Alcott lashed out at Optic in such an intemperate manner. Many reasons have been suggested and I do not propose any one answer, either simple or psychological. Here are some ideas from various sources. Ruth K. MacDonald has four suggestions. They follow with my response in parentheses.

1. Alcott was attacking successful series books published by a rival publisher. (If so, it wasn't a very good attack because she scattered her shot, did not do her homework and attacked areas where she, herself, was vulnerable, i.e., slang.)

2. She was trying to sell her own book and others like it. (You don't build yourself up by dragging the other person down and this is no way to sell book, as I believe Alcott would have been the first to admit.)

3. Perhaps "sour grapes," she sometimes felt that her books were "moral pap," and she did not dare risk her profits by writing more adventurous stories as she might have liked. It is clear from her adult thrillers that she was capable of writing stories of improbable, even immoral, high adventure. attracted by this possible reason. Alcott had a brilliant incisive mind and attracted by this possible reason. Alcott had a brilliant incisive mind and spent her life, I believe, severely constrained by everything from her childhood conditioning to the literary pretensions of the Boston world of the 1870's.)

4. It may be that she attacked the Oliver Optic books to justify to herself and to the public the kind of novel for children she did write, even when she longed to write in the "optical style" herself. (This ties in with (3) and



could have some validity. What has not been addressed, however, is the WHY in the middle of one of her own novels she took time out for this type of attack.)

Other ideas suggested by various researchers as perhaps responsible for Alcott's attack include:

1. She was put up to it by Dodge and Stockton of "St. Nicholas" who didn't go for Optic's books. This is possibly but generally Alcott was her own woman as much as she could afford to be.

2. She just wanted to poke fun at Optic, Alger, et al., and didn't realize the effect her comments would have. This is possible. Her New England humor, such as it was, came out in strange ways. It would explain the lack of accuracy and the superficial nature of the attack. It would also explain tossing the attack casually into one of her novels. It would not, however, explain either the apparent viciousness or Alcott's unwillingness to change the manuscript before hardcover publication.

3. Perhaps she really wanted to upset Adams, who had sold many more books than she had. Was she lashing out at the establishment in the person of Lee and Shepard, Loring and similar publishers? She had been a real success herself for only about six years and fame is fleeting.

4. Was she trying to cover up her earlier "effusions for the 'Saturday Evening Gazette'" or her Gothic novels? They were certainly out of character for the author of "Little Women" and it is possible that Alcott was trying to protect a recently established "image" by attacking anyone less virtuous. This type of tactic was sometimes employed by writers of both dime novels and "better" books who would have the characters in their "better" books make disparaging remarks about dime novels and those who read them.

5. In the 1852-1865 period, Optic was associated in various capacities with "Star Spangled Banner," "American Union," "New England Cultivator," "True Flag," "Flag of Our Union," and "Student and Schoolmate." It is possible that Alcott had stories rejected or even accepted by Optic and was getting even. This is a possibility.

6. Optic was the most popular boys book writer of the period. It is possible that Alcott was simply jealous of his success, was just plain nasty and took it out on Optic in her book.

7. It is possible that she really deplored slang and sensationalism and felt it her duty to deplore it in a way which would get widespread attention. This does not answer the question as to why she went after slang, an item on which she was most vulnerable, and used such poor research and arguments.

My guesses are no better than anybody else's, but probably no worse. It seems to me that the attack was in character, not out of character. As Sterne points out, 'in the seven full-length stories that followed "Little Women" and in 120 of the 176 tales and articles published from 1868 on, Louisa Alcott continued to stir her moral leaven and offer a plea for 'reforms of all kinds.' She either championed a cause or crusaded against it." Alcott was not a passive creature but a very vibrant creative feminist. To me, she appears neither especially loving nor kind, except as it suited her needs. She was a most successful juvenile writer who, after the success of "Little Women," never dared deviate from the mold, even though she may have wanted to. I think she envied Optic, both for his commercial success and for his success in writing in the style which pleased him. At the same time, she was aware of her own background, aspirations and restrictions and she had no



compunction in laying into Optic and Sensationalism in general. It seems perfectly typical to me, including the inaccuracies and unfairness of the attack, although I personally doubt if she really considered the effect it would have on Optic or on her own reputation for fairness. But I also doubt if she would have cared. That's the nature of a crusade, although as far as I know, she never again attacked Optic in print, although ten years later, as I said at the beginning, she spoke her mind about Mark Twain.

So there you have it. Agree, disagree or offer new arguments. The whole once famous feud offers interesting sidelights to a very interesting and complex author who is definitely NOT all Sweetness and Light.

#### Acknowledgements

I owe special thanks to Ann Tracy, Librarian, Michigan State University, for providing additional material on Alcott and to Peter Walther, adjunct professor, Mohawk Valley Community College, for his help on Optic data.

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### HARVEY KING SHACKLEFORD—FRED FEARNOT'S "FATHER"

By Stanley Pachon

Harvey King Shackelford—to give his full name, was a prolific and versatile writer for the popular press and nickel novels of his time, and undoubtedly one of the first to introduce the temperance theme into this type of fiction and Frank Tousey being the chief and probably the only publisher to publish so extensively temperance stories in his publications. Mr. Shackelford also contributed to the Munro publications and possibly to others.

He was born in Merriweather County, Georgia on September 20, 1840. Very little is known of his early years. He served the entire Civil War with the 9th Georgia Regiment and on July 7, 1865 married Miss Virginia Augusta Murphy and they became the parents of four children, one son and three daughters.

Mr. Shackelford was the organizer of many of the first Knights of Pythias Lodges in the state of Georgia. He was also the author of the first complete history of the Order of Knights of Pythias.

During the presidential campaign candidacy of Horatio Seymour, the Greely campaign and when Tilden ran against Hayes, Mr. Shackelford was engaged by the Democratic National Executive Committee to deliver addresses throughout the states of Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maine and Massachusetts and in all the presidential campaigns from 1876, and the state campaigns of New York until his physical condition became such that he could no longer carry on such arduous duties.

It was on these various political campaigns that Mr. Shackelford noted the excessive use of alcoholic beverages. It so impressed him with the danger such consumption posed, particularly to the younger, rising generation that he decided to use this as a theme and background for many of his stories. Mr. Leithead in his superb series of articles in the *Dime Novel Round-up* under the heading "The Anatomy of the Dime Novel." In Number thirteen of the series titled, "Temperance Stories" in the issues of Nov.-Dec. 1968 he covers the subject of Temperance in the nickel and dime novel fields quite thoroughly.

Later in his life he was called to fill the pulpit of the Baptist Church at Fairburn, but declined due to advancing deafness which forced him to use an



ear trumpet during his conversations. In 1895 he suffered an accident at Rockaway Beach, New York in which he broke his right leg and left arm which forced him to walk with crutches. This handicapped him considerably. In spite of these handicaps he continued to write almost to the end of his life. He was at this time forced to hire a secretary, who stated that Mr. Shackelford would dictate 10,000 words at one sitting, stopping only for a cup of strong coffee. He would dictate two and sometimes three stories in a week to keep ahead of his schedule.

For months before his death he suffered two strokes and on March 23rd he suffered his last stroke from which he never recovered. He passed away March 24, 1906. He was buried in the family lot in Atlanta in the West View Cemetery.

Mr. Shackelford's Fred Fearnot stories were greatly praised "for the purity of thought, chasteness of language and high ideals." Before he began to write the Fred Fearnot stories, he authored the short lived "Yankee Doodle" in 1898. He also helped on the Wild West Weekly as well as writing a number of the "Old Sleuth" stories after Harlan Page Halsey gave up writing. Indeed, Mr. Shackelford led a productive as well as active life.

### ROBERT F. SCHULKERS—"SECKATARY HAWKINS"

By Bob Chenu and Joseph Ruttar

Robert Franc Schulkers was born July 21, 1890 in Covington, Ky. This was a small town near Cincinnati in which he grew up and attended local schools. His home was located a few blocks from the banks of the Licking River along which he played as a boy, in an environment singular to that which he used as the setting for the Seckatary Hawkins clubhouse.

At an early age he began attempts at authorship and had his first story published in a newspaper when he was a fourteen year old high school student.

He went to work for the Cincinnati Enquirer in 1911 as a secretary to W. F. Wiley, the publisher. In time, other duties were given him, and among them was the task of writing book reviews. He also had stories which he had written published in the paper, and in February of 1918 the first installment of the Seckatary Hawkins Diary was thus published there. This became a very popular feature with the paper's juvenile readers, and was continued as a regular feature into 1935.

In 1923 a radio series was initiated putting the adventures of Seckatary Hawkins on the air. A Seckatary Hawkins "Fair and Square Club" was begun which youngsters could join which proved very popular, and which boasted a membership of several hundred thousand children. Schulkers thus had a lot of interest aroused in his Seckatary Hawkins character and goings-on. There was through this a ready made market for the adventures in book form.

The adverse effect of the great depression finally killed the sales of Seckatary Hawkins books, and in 1935 the syndication of the serial in the newspapers ceased. What happened to Schulkers Seckatary Hawkins projects was merely typical of what happened in general to these things in that period, especially in publication of juvenile books. Many of the series that had been among the most popular sellers in past years were terminated by the publishers of these books, and in fact some of these publishers vanished from the scene.

Schulkers then returned full time to the Enquirer, never having fully severed his connection there. He worked in the paper's library or archives from then until his death on April 8, 1972. His connection with the Enquirer thus



lasted for some 60 years. He was survived by his wife, Mrs. Julia B. (Darnell) Schulkers; two sons, Robert F. Jr., and John R., and two daughters, Mrs. Ruth Bryant and Mrs. Julia Sharman.

The books which make up the Seckatary Hawkins series are actually eleven in number. There are other titles which arose from retitling and re-issuing several of his books. We met with some problems in trying to work out their history, particularly as the only "regular" publishing company involved was Appleton. The Kidd editions were not published by a regular publisher, instead Schulkers having arranged to have two books published by a Cincinnati firm.

Chenu has a newspaper clipping dated 1951 in which Schulkers is quoted as saying, "It is just 30 years ago I was working with the late John Kidd of the then Stewart Kidd Co. for the publication of the first volume which came off the presses in November 1921. That was entitled "Stoner's Boy" and the second volume "Cazanova Treasure" appeared a year later, November 1922." Data secured from the "National Union Catalog" shows that in 1921 "Adventures in Cuba" was published by Stewart Kidd Co., and in 1922 it also published "The Red Runners." Here it is noted that the titles cited by NUC are not those mentioned by Schulkers when interviewed in 1951. The answer to this is that Schulkers referred to these books by the names they were connected with in his mind. A copy of "The Red Runners" in our collections shows Kidd as publisher on the spine of the book but carries an entry showing copyright by Robert F. Schulkers. Since we do not have a copy of "Adventures in Cuba" we cannot examine it to see if it also has this same pattern, but we believe that examination would show the same pattern. We believe the book does exist in a Kidd edition.

The copy which we have of "Seckatary Hawkins in Cuba" was published by Appleton in 1925, but shows a copyright entry "Copyright by D. Appleton and Company 1921." It would thus seem that Appleton secured the copyright from Schulkers before publishing the book under this title in 1925. The story presented is thus a second title for the story published under "Adventures in Cuba" earlier.

Appleton also copyrighted "Stormie The Dog Stealer" in 1925. Chenu has a clipping which states that Schulkers secured the Appleton copyrights in 1926. In 1926 Schulkes copyrighted and published six titles: Stoner's Boy, The Gray Ghost, Ching Toy, The Chinese Coin, The Yellow Y, and Knights of the Square Table. At this time he reprinted the earliest title giving it the name, "The Cazanova Treasure." The book thus republished had then appeared under three different titles: "Adventures in Cuba," "Seckatary Hawkins in Cuba," and "The Cazanova Treasure."

Next title to be published was "Herman the Fiddler" which Schulkers copyrighted in 1930. The last story of the Seckatary Hawkins series was copyrighted in 1932 entitled "The Ghost of Lake Tapaho." This one is a paperback edition which was sponsored by the Ralston Purina Company and was given away as a boxtop deal in connection with their radio advertising. The cover is a red and white checkerboard pattern following the Ralston trademark which refers to the firm's location at Checkerboard Square, in St. Louis. The last two titles are the most difficult for a collector to locate. This results from the depression date sales figures, coupled with the nature of distribution of the Ralston paperback. None of the Seckatary Hawkins books are easy to find although they enjoyed quite a bit of popularity among the many young fans of the syndicated newspaper series, the radio programs, and the Seckatary Hawkins Clubs, particularly back in the 20's.

Schulkers also reprinted some of the books in the 1950's. The clipping



which gives this data lists "Red Runners" and "The Gray Ghost," and says that five years previously "Stoner's Boy" and "The Cazanova Treasure" had been republished.

These books are marked by changing formats. The Kidd edition is a larger book, about 5½ by 8" in size, bound in yellow cloth with black lettering. The Appleton editions are 5 by 7¼" and bound in yellow cloth with black lettering. The dust jacket for "Stormie the Dog Stealer" has a light green front with white lettering. "Seckatary Hawkins" appears at top left with the title slightly above front center. Below in back and white is a confused melee of about eight dogs of various kinds which are apparently all hitched together on some sort of line. Robert F. Schulkers is lettered in black across the bottom of the jacket front.

The edition published by Schulkers in 1926 is about the same size as the Appleton edition, and is bound in a dark blue cloth. The front cover carries only a picture of a stout youth with hands in pockets, looking to the right. Title, author, and publisher appear in white on the spine. Dust jackets for this edition show a small head of Seckatary Hawkins at top left, and "Seckatary Hawkins" diagonally across the top half of the jacket with an open book and a sheet of paper that has an ink bottle and pen lying on it. The title appears on the bottom half of the front. Color varies from book to book, with gray, pink, green and yellow noted. Other colors may be found on other titles, as we do not have jackets on all titles.

We have a copy of "Gray Ghosts" in a similar format, but bound in tan with lettering in brown with front similarly illustrated. This would seem to be one of the later reprint editions. We also have copies of "Stoner's Boy" and "The Cazanova Treasure" which are similar in size and format, and also in tan, but which have illustrated end papers whereas all other formats have plain end papers. The dust jackets on these two books are the same picture on the front as shown in the end papers. The jacket for "The Gray Ghost" mentioned above is the same as the 1926 jackets but is white with green lettering.

"Herman The Fiddler" is a similar sized book in yellow cloth with black lettering and Seckatary Hawkins head in a circle on the front cover. "Ghost of Lake Tapaho" was described above.

A listing of titles in the series would be as follows, based on original dates of issue:

1921	Adventures In Cuba — Kidd	
1922	The Red Runners — Kidd	
1925	Stormie The Dog Stealer — Appleton	
1925	Seckatary Hawkins In Cuba—Appleton	(repeat with new
1926	The Chinese Coin—Schulkers	title of Kidd 1921)
1926	Ching Toy—Schulkers	
1926	The Knights of the Square Table—Schulkers	
1926	The Gray Ghost—Schulkers	
1926	The Yellow Y—Schulkers	
1926	Stoner's Boy—Schulkers	
1926	The Cazanova Treasure—Schulkers	(Again a new title for
1930	Herman The Fiddler—Schulkers	Kidd 1921)
1932	The Ghost of Lake Tapaho—Schulkers	(Ralston sponsored paperback)

We have not shown any reprints under the original titles. Where a new title was given we have listed it. The reprints of "The Cazanova Treasure" and "Stoner's Boy" show as publisher The Seckatary Hawkins Co. rather than Schulkers.



There are some parallels between the books of Schulkers and those of Leo Edwards. Both fostered a club for their juvenile readers. Schulkers had the Seckatary Hawkins "Fair and Square Club" and Edwards had "The Freckled Goldfish Club." Both clubs had many thousand young members. Schulkers also wrote and fostered a Seckatary Hawkins radio program which was broadcast for years. There was also a much smaller radio show involving Edwards book characters in a series based on his books.

The unusual feature of these things was the author's involvement with his juvenile readers, which was not similarly present with other juvenile series.

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 319 Larry Lathom, 339 W. Wilson #301, Glendale, Calif. 91203

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 L-20 Serials Department, A1581 URL, Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles, Cal. 90024  
 292 David K. Vaughan, 1212 Stephenson Drive, Troy, Ohio 45373  
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## LETTER

Dear Eddie

I enjoyed very much Stanley Pachon's article on "The Innovative Mr. Gleason" especially about Barnum and Beach's "Illustrated News," a journal which I have the first 26 issues. To Alger collectors the journal has significance as in the April 16, 1853 issue (Vol. 1 No. 16) appeared "Geraldine" on page 243, an Alger poem whose appearance prior to publication in "Bertha's Christmas Vision" has not been previously reported.

After this initial New York appearance Alger submitted "A Welcome to May" which was published on Page 25 of the May 7, 1853 issue. Alger at the same time had submitted this poem to "Peterson's Magazine" which published it in their May 1853 issue. (Vol. 1 No. 19). Alger's "The Cottage By the Sea" appeared the same day, May 7, 1853, in Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion as "A Welcome to May" appeared in the "Illustrated News." Since Gleason and Barnum were feuding rather strongly at the time according to the interview in Stanley Pachon's article, this may have been the reason Alger didn't appear in either magazine in June and next appeared in Gleason's in August.

Sincerely, Alex T. Shaner

## RECENT ARTICLES ABOUT DIME NOVELS, SERIES BOOKS, ETC.

PAST ERA SURVIVES AT LOCAL PRINT SHOP, by Peggy O'Brien. Article appearing in the March 24, 1987 issue of the University Daily Kansan, Lawrence, Kansas. An excellent article about our printer, Harlan Miller and his print shop in Lawrence, Kansas, one of the few print shops still using the linotype process in printing periodicals. There is also an excellent photo of Mr. Miller at his work place.

The above article led to a taped, on-camera, interview with action shots of Mr. Miller at work, over channel 49 TV station of Topeka, Kansas.

STILL HARDY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, by Michael Forman. American Way Magazine, July 1, 1987. Well informed article on the history of the Hardys. (Sent in by Jack Bales)

## NEWS NOTE

The University of Minnesota is in the process of microfilming their holdings in the following dime novel and related series. They expect the project to be completed by December 1987. This project should make the university's holding easily accessible to scholars without further damage to the items themselves.

Adventure Library, Adventure Weekly, American Series (Ivers), Bijou Series, Bob Brooks Library, Boys of New York Pocket Library, Boys Star Library, Boys Dashaway Series, Brave and Bold, Buffalo Bill Border Stories, Calumet Series, Champion Novels, Cricket Library, Deadwood Dick Library, Dillingham's Globe Library, Echo Series, Fifth Avenue Series, Wide Awake Library, Comic Library, Five Cent Weekly Library, Gem Library, Golden Library, Handsome Harry, Little Chief Library, Log Cabin Library, Log Cabin Library (Pocket Edition), Medal Library, Munro's Ten Cent Novels, Munro's Library of Popular Novels, Munro's Library, New York Weekly Series, New York Boys' Library, Nickel Library, The Novelette (Studley), Once a Week Library, Primrose Series, Red, White and Blue Library, Select Series, Three Chums, Tip Top Weekly, Union Library, War Library, War Library (Pocket Edition), Yankee Doodle, Young Klondike, Young Glory, Buffalo Bill Stories, Diamnod Dick, Jr. Weekly, Jesse James Stories, Klondike Kit Library, Motor Stories, New Buffalo Bill Weekly, Rough Rider Weekly, and Young Rover Library.



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5. New Buffalo Bill Weekly, by J. Edward Leithead
6. Rough Rider Weekly and the Ted Strong Saga, by J. Edward Leithead
7. Nick Carter Library, by J. Randolph Cox
8. New Nick Carter Weekly, by J. Randolph Cox
9. The New Sensation and the Sporting New Yorker, by Ross Craufurd
10. Nick Carter Stories, Part I, by J. Randolph Cox
12. Our Boys and New York Boys Weekly, by Ross Craufurd
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15. Magnet Detective Library, by J. Randolph Cox

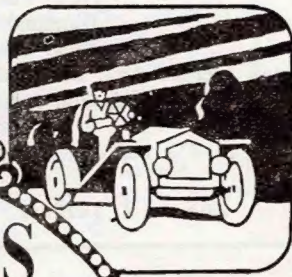
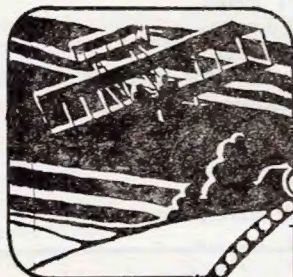
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